Who Wouldn't Be Nervous?

"The night before last the President came to Chicago to deride his critics as 'nervous Nellies.' He's darn right we're nervous. And from every indication, we're going to become more nervous."

—Chas. H. Percy, G.O.P. candidate for the U.S. Senate in Illinois, against pro-war Paul Douglas, May 19.

Indeed we'd say that this is one case where anyone who isn't nervous ought to see a psychiatrist.

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Where Communism Has Really Been Contained

Peace lies like a benediction on Cambodia. To go from Saigon to Pnom Penh is to go from the Inferno of Southeast Asia to its Paradiso. Despite the war, the break-off in diplomatic relations and the constant border incidents, Air Vietnam and Royal Air Cambodge still fly on alternate days between the two capitals. Nowhere else in the world could an hour's flight provide so sharp a contrast. To land in the capital of Cambodia after eight days amid the squalor and apprehension of Saigon is fully to savor the blessings of a neutralist policy in Southeast Asia. On the one side a dark, dirty crowded airport, where travellers are subject to interminable delays while tired and sheepish GI's pour in. On the other side, a white, clean and relaxed airport, with hardly a uniform in sight except for one police control official.

No Planes Overhead

On the ride to Pnôm Penh, I was struck by the absence of check-points and barricades, the cleanliness of the broad boulevards leading into Prince Sihanouk's capital, the modern apartment houses around the city, the well-kept lawns. The city, with its many parks and wide streets, delights the eye after the uncollected refuse of Saigon. At the bougainvillea-covered Hotel Royale, with its palms and its swimming pool, its wide halls and air-conditioned rooms, I got a palatial bedroom at only $8 a night with—luxury of luxuries—a hot bath.

In a cyclopus from the hotel into town for dinner, the night is like velvet. There are no planes overhead, no mortar or howitzer shells exploding on the outskirts. On a stroll after dinner, it looked as if everybody was out on the sidewalk after the heat of the day. The shops are open, the movies do a brisk business mostly with Italian-style spectaculars made in Hong Kong. Children play on the sidewalks but they don't beg as they do in Saigon. No one clutches at your sleeve to sell his sister. There are no importunate cyclopus drivers. The bars are few. The huge open air market in the center of town sells everything from flowers to comic books in French and Khmer. A white visitor walking amid this short, slight people, darker than the Viets, feels no apprehension. I felt much safer walking back to the hotel through the dimly lit residential areas and the dark parks than I would have felt in Washington.

In my three days in Cambodia I was charmed and delighted by the successful mixture of the traditional and the modern characteristic of Prince Sihanouk's regime. At the huge Royal Palace compound, a miniature Asian Versailles, the Queen Mother preserves the country's links with its ancient monarchy. In a guided tour through its buildings of exquisitely gilded wood and intricate yellow-blue tiles, the visitor sees the coronation sword which dates back to the 7th century, the high coronation throne under the seven-tiered sacred parasol, the two-storied pavillion from which the monarchs mounted the royal elephants, several 12th century cannons and a small fortune in the dynasty's gems under glass. Everywhere are images of Naga, the 7-headed sacred serpent of Vishnu, and of Buddha in that mixture of Brahman and Buddhist faith brought there three centuries ago by India's traders and missionaries. From a palace in one corner of the grounds, the gongs and xylophones of the Royal ballet school were going full blast at morning rehearsal, off limits, like an Oriental seraglio, to visitors.

Not more than a mile away, on the banks of the broad and leisurely flowing Mekong, there is a sight of quite a different sort. An exposition hall built on clean modern lines displays the results of ten years development (1955-65) under the Popular Socialist movement established by Prince Sihanouk. Graphic colored charts show no tractors in 1955, and 1030 in 1965. Here the regime boasts that illiteracy is now only 20% and that in one year, thanks to a volunteer teaching campaign (it recalls Castro's Cuba) there will be none. Popular Socialism seems to have stimulated private enterprise. The charts show an impressive expansion in private and mixed enterprises; the publicly owned sector is more recent

(Continued on Page Two)

A Letter to LBJ: Is This Restraint?

"Dear Mr. President: We find the following two statements difficult to reconcile:

"(1) Time Magazine (April 29), 'The Pentagon plans to use 638,000 tons of bombs in Vietnam in 1966.' [The figure is from McNamara's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April—IFS.] With 127,000 square miles and a combined population of 25 million, this represents 5 tons of bombs for every square mile and 1 ton for every 40 persons.

"(2) 'We have used our power not willingly and recklessly ever but always reluctantly and with restraint,' Princeton speech.

"Would you consider it restraint if a 'benefactor' from abroad budgeted a similar ratio of bombs for every square mile and citizen of the United States?"

Name withheld.

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(*Continued from Page One*)

and confined largely to banking and the export-import business, which has more than doubled. The United States is conspicuously absent from the countries shown as having trade accords with Cambodia. China and the Soviet bloc are there, so is Japan. The country has trade accords with both West and East Germany, as with South and North Korea, a demonstration of neutralism in trade as well as politics.

No Mines or Snipers

Much taken for granted elsewhere seems novel after a week in South Vietnam. It is a pleasure to be able to drive 30 kilometers out into the countryside without armed escort and with no fear of mines or snipers. In a model village a squad of officials in black trousers, white shirts and black ties were waiting to receive us. High green-tipped sugar palms against a blue sky with cotton tufts of clouds provided the backdrop. Children played with the pump handle of a new village well and roamed with the geese and chickens under the thatched houses built on stilts. Birds and flowers were everywhere. We were proudly shown outdoor toilets, a clean though rudimentary hospital and dispensary, and a training school for midwives attended by bright-eyed nurses in starched white uniforms. We inspected a new school with a children's playground. Then we drove out of the village past an Esso station and two bonzes walking along the road in orange robes under white parasols. We inspected a dam being built to make possible two rice crops a year, a novel departure in an easy-going country, underpopulated by Asian standards, where a favorite saying has been "If it grows," i.e. wild, "why bother to plant it?" On our way back that evening in Pnom Ponh we visited a lovely pagoda, lit up like a Christmas tree with bright red and green lights. A rather pompous bonze inside wanted to know how many Buddhists there were in the United States and lost all interest in further conversation when told very few. The tiny temple bells tinkling sweetly in the evening breeze in the darkening garden outside were unforgettable.

The ruler of this Oklahoma sized kingdom with its five-million people has had to make up for its military weakness with political guile. In steering a course amid international rivalries and revolutionary pressure, Prince Sihanouk has far outdistanced LBJ as a wheeler-dealer. The Prince ascended the throne at the age of 18 in 1941 at the beginning of the most turbulent period in its history. He wrested independence from the French before the Geneva conference, forced the withdrawal of the invading Viet Minh and by a 5 hour "sitdown strike" at Geneva delayed the signing of the Geneva accords until Molotov and Chou En-lai gave way on his demand that Cambodia, unlike Vietnam, not be neutralized. It was left free to import arms and to make defensive alliances. Cambodia was then considered the most pro-Western of the new regimes in Indo-China. Since then, Prince Sihanouk has shown extraordinary agility. He checked republican sentiment by resigning the throne in 1955 in favor of his father, thus freeing himself for that active participation in politics which was not allowed him so long as he was king. He outmaneuvered the local Communists by joining the neutralist camp at Bandung, in return for promises of "non-interference" by Communist China and North Vietnam. A month later he signed his first agreement for direct military aid from the U.S. Later that year his "Popular Socialist" party won 80% of the votes and all of the 91 seats in the National Assembly.

Sihanouk could, if he were not so clever, truly say "L'etat c'est moi." It is as if he were a Louis XIV, a Tito and a Harry Truman rolled into one. No one has been more skilful at getting aid from all sides. At home, "Monseigneur" has managed to reconcile monarchy with a democratic facade, Five Year Plans, and enough "socialism" to make Cambodia seem fraternal if confusing in Moscow and Peking. In his spare time, he writes first-rate editorials for his French language press and composes popular songs. There's been nothing quite like him in all the annals of statecraft. He's genuinely popular. His country unlike Laos and South Vietnam is troubled by no Communist guerrillas. Indeed it is the only regime in Southeast Asia where the Communists have been contained. This is what makes consistent U.S. hostility to him seem so irrational. The Communist Chinese have treated Sihanouk with a social and political "correctness"

Here's The Answer, Mr. Buchwald

"If it takes 500 B-52 bombers 3,000 tons of bombs to shut down one road from North Vietnam, it will take the Viet Cong how long to open that road?"

—Art Buchwald "Testing the Testers" May 19.

"American targets in North Vietnam included . . . the road through the Mu Gia pass, a gateway to the Ho Chi Minh trail, [which] was reported cut in three places. U.S. pilots have repeatedly reported blocking the pass, but the Communists have always reopened it quickly."

—AP from Saigon in Washington Star *May 12.*

"USAF reconnaissance of the supply roadnet from North to South Vietnam has located about sixty such choke points. ["Stretches of road which, if taken out, cannot easily be bypassed, creating traffic bottlenecks."] Since the North Vietnamese are putting effort into repairing roads and bridges, these choke points must be hit every two days if the roadnet is to be effectively kept closed. The North Vietnamese are able to get traffic moving through damaged choke points in an average of 48 hours."

—Those Bombings in North Vietnam, in Air Force, *organ of the Air Force Association, April 1966.*

Probably The Most Expensive Hunting Operations in The History of Human Warfare

"U.S. planes flew 305 sorties in South Vietnam in support of ground troops, killing 30 Viet Cong. . . ."

—AP from Saigon in Washington Star *May 16.*

"U.S. and South Vietnamese planes flew 563 sorties Thursday against enemy fortifications and troop areas in South Vietnam. The American pilots, who made 376 such flights, said they killed 51 Viet Cong."

—AP from Saigon in Washington Post, *May 21.*

These are typical figures from the daily summaries of air action in South Vietnam. In the first it took 10 sorties to kill one VC; in the second, it took seven. This seemed like a very expensive way to kill Viet Cong so we checked with the Pentagon to get some idea of costs. These are the figures we were given: It cost about $150 to $200 an hour to operate a fighter plane. The average mission lasts two hours. Each plane carries from 4,000 to 8,000 pounds of bombs, which cost about $350 per 1,000 pounds. So the average load runs from $1400 to $2800. It costs close to $2 million for each fighter plane and $375,000 to train the pilot. Without counting these capital costs and the value of the bombs, it will be seen that in the first summary above it cost from $1500 to $2000 each in operational costs alone to kill one VC, while in the second the average operational cost was from $1000 to $1500. This is probably the most expensive kill cost of any combat operation in history, even assuming that all the dead are enemies and none hapless peasants.

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intended to demonstrate their readiness to co-exist with different social regimes on their borders. But the U.S. has allied itself with Cambodia's ancient enemies—the Thais and the Viets—and sought through the CIA to overthrow him. A "Free Serei" movement aimed at Sihanouk serves as guide and tool for our Special Forces. Sihanouk, like Cambodians generally, fears the Viet, whether Communist or anti-Communist. As late as March 6, 1964, he accused Hanoi of being as "vague as the Anglo-Saxons" in replying to his request for a guarantee of his borders. But Prince Sihanouk has come to believe the Viet Cong will win and that his country's safety lies in cultivating good relations with the rebels and with Hanoi. "Our American friends are remarkable organizers, brilliant technicians and excellent soldiers," the Prince wrote three years ago. "But their incontestable realism stops short of the realm of poltiics, where the attitude of the ostrich seems to them to conform to their best interests."

The Cambodian attitude toward the Vietnamese war was reflected while I was there in the April 22 issue of *Réalités*

> **"Maybe I don't have the education or understanding, but I wonder what we're doing here anyhow," said the captain, "I'm all for killing Charley but I wonder what's the point if the Vietnamese can't get the benefit of our being here and fighting their war for them."**
>
> **—*"U.S. Officers Complain of Viet Unrest" by Ralph B. Kennan from Saigon in* Baltimore Sun, *May 22.***

Cambodgiennes, an unofficial mouthpiece. It carried an interview with a 2nd Lt. Tram Minh Bach of the South Vietnamese Air Force who had fled for refuge to Cambodia. He defected after he was upbraided in brutal and insulting fashion by his American "advisor" in front of his own men. He said, "The Americans act like bosses and treat us like 'boys' "—the word "boy" as thus used in French is an echo of colonialism. When he was asked if he might join the Viet Cong, the 2nd Lt. replied that he opposed both Communist and American domination of his country. "The nationlist and independent policy of Prince Sikanouk is basically the best for this region," he said. "He defends his country and nothing more and he makes it progress in peace. That is an example all Vietnamese patriots ought to meditate."

An unsigned editorial in the same issue put forward a subtler neutralist view. It dealt with the nationalist demonstrations against Ky in Hué and Saigon as led by the Buddhists under Thich Tri Quang. It derided the idea of free elections in a country "Where the government only controls a fifth of the territory and a quarter of the population." It said that while the nationalists were tired of the war, disgusted with American domination and hostile to the military junta in Saigon, they were so compromised by their own political pasts as to fear NLF reprisals if the Americans left. "In fact, all the nationalists of Hué, Danang and Saigon want," the editorial continued, "is that the U.S. allow them to replace the team presently in power while the U.S. continues to 'protect them against the Viet Cong." It advises true nationalists to join the National Liberation Front "so that they can counterbalance the Communist influence there and preserve the future." It draws a parallel with the French resistance where Gaullists fought side by side with Communists. This allowed the non-Communists after liberation "to bring into being a government in which the Communists had a place—but no more than that." It said the time had come for joint action between Nationalists and Communists to establish a provisional government which would ask for American withdrawal. "We sincerely believe," the editorial concluded, "that the Americans, no longer having a juridical excuse to justify their presence, would acquiesce in this demand—and would not be so displeased, in reality, to put an end to an adventure which, carried to its conclusion, as they are already sufficiently aware, would result inevitably in a disaster for them." In the Cambodian view, only joint action against the U.S. can prevent a Communist takeover in Vietnam and make possible a neutralist solution. This reflects Prince Sihanouk's own wily record, in which he has outmaneuvered Communists not by fighting them but by taking them into camp.

I had hoped while in Cambodia to speak with some representative of the NLF or at least with Wilfred Burchett, who has been covering the war from the rebel side. Burchett was in Hanoi, but from another source in close touch with the Front and recently returned from Viet Cong territory I was given a summary of its views.

(*Continued on Page Four*)

Wall St. Journal For Getting Out

> **"How must the Vietnamese spectacle impress others threatened by China? It is beginning to appear that if the war ever ends and South Vietnam has somehow been saved from Communism, we will have on our hands a nation in shreds. . . . On balance, then, it looks as if the U.S. is losing more than it is gaining in its own interest of combatting Communism and promoting freedom. . . . It takes courage to stand up to international Communist barbarians; no less courage to admit it, if such is the case, when a military-political situation has gone hopelessly sour."**
>
> **—Wall Street Journal, *"The Turning Point" May 24.***

Does the Associated Press Consider Such Reporting Too Frank for the U.S. Press?

> **"The political instability in Vietnam is gravely damaging the prestige and influence of the U.S. in the country. . . . The contacts between the American authorities and the Generals is reduced to polite smiles and ambiguous promises and equally to continual demands for money. . . . It seems that the more heavily the Americans intervene in the war, the more their reputation with the people decreases. This is in great part due to operations against the Viet Cong in the course of which hundreds of villages are crushed. The innocent perish and the number of refugees increases.**
>
> **"In the shanty-towns near the urban centers, there is developing a new proletarian class tired of the war and ready to listen to the peace promises of the Viet Cong. On the other hand, in Saigon, the Generals in red parachutist berets, displaying their rows of medals, declare themselves ready to pursue the war to final victory, with U.S. troops and money. In the meantime Vietnamese soldiers desert at the rate of 6,000 per month. [Secretary McNamara admitted under questioning at a Senate hearing (Wash. Post May 12) that desertions have been even higher than 10,000 to 12,000 a month—IFS]**
>
> **"The massive bombardments, the artillery fire, the soldiers clambering around [crapahutant] in the regions devastated by the war, have not contributed to American prestige. Words like "the free world," anti-Communism and democracy find no echo among the peasants. The Vietcong have succeeded more and more in controlling the economy, especially in the Mekong delta. On the other hand the great bases tend to isolate the American soldiers. A high officer declared 'We have fewer friends than we had a year ago before we began to send in troops.' "**
>
> **—*From an AP Saigon dispatch dated May 12 in* Le Monde *of May 13. When we failed to find it in any U.S. paper we checked with AP. We were told it was an AP special for* Le Monde. *We've yet to see the AP write as frankly for its U.S. clients.***

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An Interview With An Unofficial Spokesman for the NLF

(*Continued from Page Three*)

"It is not true that Peking forbids Hanoi to talk peace or that Hanoi forbids the NLF to do so," my informant said. "The Front is free to negotiate. Washington must understand that the Front is not a tool of Peking. The Front claims to be the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people in the sense that there is no other organized force with which to deal. Any group can join the Front if it is sincerely for independence and the end of American intervention. The door is open."

My informant said this was why the Front had never set up a provisional government, though it has a parallel administration everywhere in South Vietnam. It wants as broadly based a government as possible for the final take-over. It has no faith in elections. It doubts that they will be held and feels sure that if they are held, they will be as phony as were those under Diem. "It is wrong to think," my informant told me, "that the Front is strong only in the villages. In every mission, in every part of the government, the Front has its people. When a South Vietnamese soldier gets a 15-day pass to go home and visit his native village, he goes to an office of the Front and gets it stamped to assure him a safe conduct. When trucks go out of Saigon to Mytho they obtain a *laissez-passer* from the South Vietnamese government. But on top of this, outside Saigon, there is stamped an authorization of the Front.

Collects Taxes Even in Saigon

"The Front collects taxes in every city, including Saigon. It is already planning for the maintenance of law and order in Saigon when the government falls apart and it takes over. The Front realizes there will be a serious problem to prevent looting and killing. The day Saigon is liberated the only protection the Americans will have will be the Front. Protection will not be easy in a city of 2,000,000 seething with hatred. The problem is made the more serious because Saigon has become a city from which law and morals have disappeared. The day authority is finally transferred to the Front will be a critical one and the Front has several dozens of armed cadres trained and ready to take over control and maintain law and order.

"U.S. emissaries," he continued, "want to negotiate some way to stay in South Vietnam. They are wrong. They have to leave just as the French did. Only then can they have an embassy negotiate trade relations and discuss economic aid. But first, all traces of occupation must be ended.

"The Front wants a neutral foreign policy. It sees reunification as a thing of the distant future. Too many differences and difficulties make it impossible at this time. The internal policy will be socialist, but not like China or North Vietnam; it will be another of those forms of Asian socialism of which some variant may be found everywhere in this region. The U.S. must realize that this is a struggle for independence, not a war of aggression. The Front regards Thich Tri Quang as a man of the Middle Ages who wants some way to keep U.S. troops in South Vietnam. It wants a truly independent South Vietnam. Even Ho Chi Minh's idea of a bi-federal union is something for the future."

Only by Peace and Politics

The NLF sees the Indonesian People's Conference as the possible germ of a larger neutralist confederation that might some day unite South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. So does Prince Sihanouk. The Conference last year brought together neutralist and Communist Front representatives from North and South Vietnam and from Laos with those of Cambodia. South Vietnamese neutralist exiles from Paris were also in attendance. The Conference is soon to open a permanent office in Pnom Penh which might someday play a part in peace talks. The little publicized recent visit to Moscow by the King of Laos and his Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma (*Le Monde*, May 19) indicate that they are still thinking along neutralist lines, too. Cambodia's ruler believes that only by peace and politics can Communism be contained. For 12 years the United States has tried to contain it by military dictatorship, repression and war. The Viet Cong is far stronger today than when it started. After 12 years, Cambodia's success and our failure, Cambodia's progress and Vietnam's suffering, should be enough to show which is the wiser course.

Gallup Poll Shows Rising Peace Sentiment

For the first time since last July, the Gallup poll (Washington Post May 22) showed approval of Johnson's policies in Vietnam below the 50% mark—it was 47%. More important, the latest poll showed 54% for withdrawal and only 28% for continuation of U.S. efforts if the South Vietnamese "start fighting on a big scale among themselves." If the South Vietnam government decides to stop fighting altogether, 72% think the U.S. should withdraw and only 16% think our troops should stay on. Asked if South Vietnam could establish "a stable government", only 32% answered "yes" 48% "no". The rest were undecided. The replies showed very little difference between Republicans and Democrats. Gallup reported "overwhelming approval" only for Administration peace efforts.

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